**one (and then the other)**

Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at https://archiveofourown.org/works/51684217.

**Rating:**
Explicit

**Archive Warning:**
No Archive Warnings Apply

**Category:**
M/M

**Fandom:**
The Summer I Turned Pretty (TV 2022)

**Relationships:**
Steven Conklin/Jeremiah Fisher, (past) Steven Conklin/Taylor Jewel, (background) Isabel "Belly" Conklin/Conrad Fisher

**Characters:**
Steven Conklin, Jeremiah Fisher, mentions of various others

**Additional Tags:**
internships, New York City, Hand Jobs, Blow Jobs, Getting Together

**Language:**
English

**Stats:**
Published: 2023-11-19 Words: 2,868 Chapters: 1/1

# one (and then the other)

by orphan_account


Summary

He trails off, tugging at the collar of his t-shirt. When he looks back over at Jeremiah he sees that his pupils are blown wide and he thinks that his own probably look the same. There’s no space between them again, just the low hum of other people’s conversations and the heat buzzing around them and that feeling that he’s not allowed to forget bubbling to the surface of everything.

Or: It's summer and Steven and Jeremiah are both interning in the city. They can't stop sharing space, or anything else really. It's only the beginning for them.


Notes

See the end of the work for notes

It's mid August when it happens.

It's hot, sweltering even, but summer in the city is like that and like nothing else, even now when the sky has gone pink and the evening is starting to settle. And there's Jere—laughing, pulling him along by the hem of his shirt while Steven tries his hardest to keep up, with his blazer draped over his arm and one of the sleeves dragging on the sidewalk. He picks up his pace a little and grabs him by the sides of his arms when he finally gets the momentum. It's not a gentle *wait* but it's never been easy to make Jeremiah stop once he's already started in on something.

His skin is warm under Steven's hands, and he lets them linger longer than he should until Jeremiah turns around in his grip, his abs peeking out where he cut the arms off his shirt. It's a casual day for him.

His internship just ended—two weeks ahead of Steven's—and now he's spending the time in between exploring the city. He's here year-round since he transferred to NYU but he never seems to get tired of it or overwhelmed like Steven did those first few days—when navigating his way to the accommodations *his* internship put him up in meant getting through endless crowds of people and getting honked at by the cars when he had to dash across traffic lanes. It made him miss New Jersey.

His mom had told him over the phone that he would get used to it but he wasn't so sure until he'd run into Jere in a coffee shop a week in. They were both wearing suits that they didn't look like they belonged in and they'd sat by the windows and clunked their to-go cups together like they'd never stopped talking. *Here's to New York City's finest young professionals*.

They'd been tangled with each other growing up—the middle children of the group, the same age. He'd started to resent it at some point, maybe even before the whole Belly thing, because some part of him could never imagine them being friends if their moms hadn't forced them together and he had always privately felt that he had more in common with Conrad than he did with Jere. He wasn't wrong—there's a reason he considers Conrad his best friend these days—but here, with nobody else around, him and Jeremiah seemed to slip back into each other and become twin movements again. Just like that.

His dad commented on it when he visited—*wow, it's just like the old*

*days. I see one of you and blink and suddenly there's the other.* But he hadn't told Steven that he was stopping by and that was after they'd basically started living together (because Jeremiah's roommate situation was getting ridiculous and Steven felt weird coming home to an empty apartment every night—like he was missing out on something by doing well). His dad had actually walked in on them attempting to be adults—he'd just finished pouring very legally acquired white wine into coffee mugs for them and Jeremiah was shaping pasta dough. His dad was a good sport about it and told him to pour him one too but he almost definitely called Laurel to laugh about it as soon as he left; the texts she sent were *very* obvious.

When he loosens his grip, Jeremiah shakes his curls out of his face, links his hands together and drapes an elbow over Steven's shoulder. It's always been easy for them to share space and the jacket on his arms hangs limply between them, a silly, useless barrier. If it's going to be the only thing between them then it might as well not even be there. He is strangely grateful that it is, though.

A soft shove—"Do you even know where we're going?—and Jeremiah stumbles off him and, recovering, slings an arm around his shoulder.

That gets Jeremiah pleading that the city is a grid again and Steven groans. They've been gliding past townhouses and apartments for ages and he has no idea where they are or even what street they came out on when they got off the train. He's not even sure what borough they're in.

He tells Jeremiah to give him the address and he puts it into his phone —typing as he half-drags Jeremiah to the edge of the sidewalk so they can be out of the way while the route is loading. He feels a hand on his chest while they both stare down at the screen. "I got this."

It turns out that they're only two blocks off which earns him a few soft pats from the hand on his chest, but he shuts down the gloating because they were still heading in *the wrong direction* and it would probably be three or four blocks if he hadn't stopped them.

The rest of the walk is short, not even ten minutes, but his button down is driving him crazy by the time they get there. It itches at his neck and chafes at his elbows and he finally decides that he has to take it off before they can go inside only he keeps fumbling the buttons until Jeremiah gently shoves his hands away and undoes them for him. Those surprisingly deft fingers (surprising, because it's always been a mystery how Jere is so athletic yet so, so uncoordinated) work

their way down button by button and Steven has to force himself to watch the people filtering in and out instead. He tries to focus on the fact that they're both definitely underdressed now but he finds it hard to care when it's so hot like this and his eyes keep drifting back over.

He knows what this is. It's not a crush, it's not like anytime he's ever wanted somebody before. It's just the way things *are* with them. They've shared beds and clothes and baths (there are photos, somewhere, that Susannah used to love to bring out) their entire lives and this is just another part of that. He wouldn't be able to describe it for anybody else but he knows it like he knows his own hands—how they can build things, complex things, the type of things that got him into Princeton, and take them apart again. It's something that's always been there but there are times when he feels it more, like he's being forced to remember it. Just a few mornings ago Jere had shoved coffee into his hands with a *hey, you had a late night* and he had trouble ignoring it then too. There was nothing special about that moment, and he's had a lot of late nights trying to impress the people he's working under, but he felt it all the same and retreated to his room with the excuse of needing to get ready for the day.

"There, all good now." Jeremiah says and Steven swallows, shrugging the button down off to reveal the white t-shirt underneath and then swinging it over his shoulder with the blazer.

They head inside and they're greeted with champagne flutes and no ID check. They're shushed by like three different people when they cheer too loudly and clink their glasses together but that doesn't stop them from doing it again every time they pass a waiter and exchange the old glasses for new ones. This was supposed to be a party anyways, a casual one that Jeremiah had heard about from a friend of a friend of a friend of a coworker but it's turned out to be more of an upscale event?/art show without really being either. They just keep walking around this big industrial space and mimicking things they've heard people say about art before, probably annoying everyone around them.

*It's a special piece…World War Two…abstract…postmodern?…a masterpiece!…why, Mr. Conklin you have quite the eye...Oh no Mr. Fisher, it's all you…*

And:

*Hear me out, hear me out: do you think this would look good above the couch?*

*I think it would kill the vibes.*

*What vibes?*

*Our vibes.*

*You're right. We should hang it in the bathroom.*

They've done a few rounds of the space and they're three? four? drinks in when they stumble into an alcove near what must be the back of the building. There's a tiny padded bench with just enough room for one of them but they both end up leaning against the back wall for support, their arms brushing up against each other only to be unsettled again whenever one of them does something to make the other laugh.

His dad was right—it is just like the old days but it's also not. They've expanded beyond Cousins and now there's more of everything and more of them too, like they've been filled out by it. The two of them had always wanted more—the ivy league, this city, the whole world—and been bold enough to go for it. It's not ambition that they share—it's just a way they have of believing in themselves, of knowing what they're capable of and not wasting it. It's got to be less exhausting than whatever it is that Conrad and Belly do, but those two have always had trouble imagining the world as something bigger than what's immediately in front of them, have to be pushed constantly to see beyond whatever moment they're in. Steven does his best to help them with it, tries to nudge them in the right direction when he sees them slipping but there's only so much he can do and past a certain point he has to focus on himself. He can't deny that the results have been good.

Princeton is everything he wanted it to be. He's challenged there like he never was in high school and everyday there he's introduced to something new, even things that aren't related to engineering. And he has people who get him there, who are interested in the same things as he is and who are operating at the same level as he is, *his* people that he found just like Laurel said that he would. And now he has this too, this internship that's always testing him and pushing him in the best ways possible and this city that belongs to him now—this city that him and Jeremiah made their own in between late night take out sessions and arguing over how many rats they saw while waiting for their train in the morning so they can rate the station properly online (they settled on many— *many* rats).

Eventually, they tire themselves out and are forced to give their ribs a rest. When their breathing has evened out a little, Jeremiah turns his head to the side and gives Steven a look like he's seriously thinking something over.

"Is any of this good art?" he asks, "I really can't tell."

Steven bites his lip and starts talking, hoping an answer will come to him as he goes. Yeah, neither of them know anything about art but they know a lot about other things. Things that are also maybe their own type of art. There's the poetry Jeremiah likes now—he says he just likes the way it sounds when it's being read out loud but there's a story about a finance bro ex somewhere in there that Steven chooses not to poke at for now. And there's engineering, which is beautiful and definitely art, at least to him—and there's television and, like, video games, and the movies Susannah loved and food, even, for sure food, and all sorts of things that can't be found on canvases in weird warehouses—

He trails off, tugging at the collar of his t-shirt. When he looks back over at Jeremiah he sees that his pupils are blown wide and he thinks that his own probably look the same. There's no space between them again, just the low hum of other people's conversations and the heat buzzing around them and that feeling that he's not allowed to forget bubbling to the surface of everything. When Jere tells him to *keep talking*, he nods and keeps going even when Jeremiah starts kissing down his neck, making his way down his chest with his hands pushing his shirt up and sinking slowly to his knees.

He pauses before unzipping his pants and it makes Steven pause too, long enough to reach over and brush a loose curl out of his face, to shake his head *no* when Jere looks him in the eyes and says *tell me to stop*.

Then Jeremiah is nuzzling him, breathing him in, taking him into his mouth and everything goes fuzzy and haywire in Steven's brain. He has to bite down on his own arm to keep from moaning too loudly and it's the sound Jeremiah makes around him when he tugs at his hair with the other hand that finally does him in (he makes a mental note of that one— *hair pulling: good*).

Jeremiah swallows and pulls off of him and when they've both had a second to recover he helps him back up to his feet—but he doesn't let him off easy when he tries to offer him an out. When he's shaking his head and playing with his hands in a nervous way that's not like him

at all and not looking him in the eyes— *it doesn't have to mean anything if you don't want it to*. Because that's the thing about Jeremiah —he wants to keep it fun and light and easy but he also wants to be loved. Steven spent so long refusing to take him seriously that he almost forgot about this part. This part that the others never saw to begin with. Belly makes claims—likes to think that she was the Fisher whisperer or something—but the mess she made of everything doesn't track against them. He never says anything when she brings it up because he knows it would just make things worse but it's there in the back of his mind. The person who knew Jeremiah the best was always him.

But this is also the one area that Steven has always been too hesitant in—the only one that he *doesn't* go for what he wants in because fundamentally, he doesn't trust his feelings as much as he does his hands or his eyes or his brain. It's hard for him to say what he feels because what he feels makes less sense to him than what he knows—he could always react to it but he could never put it out into the world, not in a coherent way, and not without worrying that it would be trampled on before he even finished speaking. He remembers the way that Taylor had to break up with him, how she had to be the one to make it official when they'd been drifting for the better part of a year, only calling each other every couple of weeks and even those calls were short and half-hearted and mostly about Belly. That Thanksgiving everybody had been gentle with him and tiptoed around the subject but he didn't know how to tell them that he wasn't nearly as sad as they thought that he was—mostly because he felt like he *should* be more sad and hadn't yet figured out why he wasn't.

But he wants to be done with that, has to be, and right now he knows exactly what he wants. Right now he's love drunk and maybe also a little normal drunk and him and Jere are twin movements, are blink-and-there's-the-other, and they'll keep drinking after this and on the way home neither of them will have to ask to know that they can lean their heads against each other in the back of the cab. It's always been so easy for them to be like that.

He crowds Jeremiah against the wall and runs a thumb over his swollen lips. It's his turn to say it. *Tell me to stop, Jere*. But he keeps quiet and Steven leans in and kisses the taste of himself off of him. Keeping their heads close together with a hand on the back of Jeremiah's head, he slides a hand down his pants and he's there and steady when Jeremiah's breath hitches and he needs something to hold onto. And he doesn't worry about somebody walking past this little place they're hiding in and seeing them like this because at the

end of it they’re too breathless and hazy to care—turning in each others arms, lazily kissing and shifting who can be seen from the opening. It's the same thing—always one first and then the other, but brighter and clearer and more. *Huh, this is what it’s like then*, he thinks, *coming into focus with somebody else*.

It goes straight to his head and they’re both delirious like that—like heat fever, like a summer high. He wants to hold onto it for as long as he can.

## End Notes

find me on tumblr @nightsporting!

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!